



## CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the Heritage Preservation Commission

HPC Agenda Item #5

July 22, 2014

BZH-28269

### HERITAGE PRESERVATION APPLICATION SUMMARY

*Property Location:* 3744 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
*Project Name:* Minnesota Spokesman Recorder Building Nomination  
*Prepared By:* Jeremiah Osokpo, City of Minneapolis Urban Scholar, with John Smoley, Senior Planner  
*Applicant:* Councilmember Elizabeth Glidden  
*Project Contact:* Jeremiah Osokpo, 612-673-5905  
*Ward:* 8  
*Neighborhood:* Central  
*Request:* Nomination for Designation as a Landmark

### HISTORIC PROPERTY INFORMATION

<b>Current Name</b>	Minnesota Spokesman Recorder Building
<b>Historic Name</b>	St. Paul and Minneapolis Spokesman Recorder Building
<b>Historic Address</b>	3744 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South
<b>Original Construction Date</b>	1958
<b>Original Owner</b>	Minnesota Spokesman Recorder
<b>Original Architect</b>	Vernon K. Hosso
<b>Original Builder</b>	Carlson – LaVine
<b>Historic Use</b>	Print Shop & Office
<b>Current Use</b>	Office
<b>Proposed Use</b>	Office
<b>Other Historical Designations</b>	N/A

## SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

The *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder* began its publication in 1934 following several locations in Minneapolis and St. Paul before settling at 3744 South Fourth Avenue in 1958. Vernon K. Hosso was the Architect and Carlson – LaVine was the builder of the *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder* Building.<sup>1</sup> The Spokesman recorder is a one story building built to be used for a print shop and office space. It is a rectangular one story structure that has a flat roof. The building has a smooth face block exterior and a mural on the side of the building, although not completed, will enhance the integrity and history of the building. The façade contains a corner entrance which is covered by an extension of the front of the building. The façade also has a second glass door entrance, and a set of windows on top of the entrance door and the newsroom entrance door on the opposite end of the front part of the building. Windows are present on all sides of the building. The front facing side of the building has the MSR signage on all window panes.

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Staff has received resounding support from the community, property owner, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Legacy Council in Ward 8.

## ANALYSIS

### CONSIDERATION FOR NOMINATION

Per section 599.230 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations, the Heritage Preservation Commission shall review all complete nomination applications. If the Heritage Preservation Commission determines that a nominated property or property appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation contained in section 599.210 the commission may institute interim protection and direct the planning director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study of the property.

### SIGNIFICANCE

The *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder* appears to meet at least one of the criteria for designation per the following criterion:

**(2) The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.**

The *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder* remains the longest running Minnesota African American Newspaper approaching its 80<sup>th</sup> year of serving the community since October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1934.<sup>2</sup> Originally known as the St.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Minneapolis Building Permit #B361730, 3744 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.

<sup>2</sup> “Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, a news voice of Black Minnesota,” *African American Registry*, accessed June 16, 2014, [http://www.aaregistry.org/historic\\_events/view/minnesota-spokesman-recorder-news-voice-black-minnesota](http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/minnesota-spokesman-recorder-news-voice-black-minnesota).

*Paul and Minneapolis Spokesman Recorder*, it was a creation of the publisher Cecil Newman. The *Spokesman Recorder* started as one of the earliest African American family owned newspapers in Minnesota. Although the *Spokesman* was not the first African-American newspaper in Minnesota, it has retained its status as the longest standing Family owned African-American newspaper within Minnesota.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to the *Spokesman Recorder* there were two African American Newspapers that lasted from 1885 to 1925. The first was *The Western Appeal* which was later known as *The Appeal* after it broadened its circulation to Minneapolis and Chicago. Although the newspaper strived to become a source for local and national news, its beginning years were characterized as a tumultuous start.<sup>4</sup> After years of continuous change within the *Appeal* and “the death of the sole proprietor, co-editor, editor, and contributing author John Quincy Adams, the *Appeal* finally merged with the *Northwestern Bulletin* on January 1, 1924. Shortly after the merger, the *Northwestern-Bulletin Appeal* closed its doors ending its history as the longest running African American newspaper in Minnesota at the time.”<sup>5</sup>

After the closing of the *Northwestern-Bulletin Appeal*, *St. Paul and Minneapolis Spokesman Recorder* published its first article on October 8, 1934.<sup>6</sup> The first Issue of the MSR demonstrated the vision which Newman wished for. The purpose of the *Spokesman Recorder* according to Newman’s vision was to collect and publish the stories of African Americans in the community while appealing to all races. Through the age of the civil rights movement, four American wars and segregation, the *Spokesman Recorder* still retained its respect within the community and published ongoing news about how African Americans and the world interact with each other. The *Spokesman* often blended the news from the community with what was going on around the U.S. in order to show the continuing challenge that African Americans faced and are still struggling with.

Over its 79 years, the *Spokesman Recorder* has used a solid journalism background to help mobilize Minnesota’s Africa-American communities in understanding the issues and events that are happening that either affect them or go unnoticed until it is too late.<sup>7</sup> Tracey Williams, granddaughter to Cecil Newman, still honors the foundation which the *Spokesman recorder* was founded upon. The motto is as follows:

As it was spoken let us record.

We live in an ever-changing world. As technology blurs boundaries, we come in closer contact with our brothers and sisters from around the world. As the Minnesota *Spokesman-Recorder* approaches a new millennium, we are expanding in concert with our constituency, to serve the changing

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<sup>3</sup> “About,” MSR Online, accessed June 13, 2014, <http://www.spokesman-recorder.com/about/>.

<sup>4</sup> “About The Appeal, (Saint Paul, Minn.) 1889-19??,” *Library of Congress & National Endowment for the Humanities*, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016810/>.

<sup>5</sup> About The Appeal, (Saint Paul, Minn.) 1889-19??,” *Library of Congress & National Endowment for the Humanities*, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016810/>.

<sup>6</sup> “About The Appeal, (Saint Paul, Minn.) 1889-19??,” *Library of Congress & National Endowment for the Humanities*, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016810/>.

<sup>7</sup> James Sanna, “Minnesota *Spokesman-Recorder* turns 75,” *TC Daily Planet*, July 3, 2008, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/article/2008/06/28/minnesota-spokesman-recorder-turns-75.html>.

demographics of the African global community. Our goal is to Unite, Serve and Represent that constituency.<sup>8</sup>

Tracey Williams has not only upheld this slogan but has focused on highlighting and recognizing the achievements of African-Americans within communities in Minnesota while printing the stories that matter to the people.

At a time of oppression, segregation, and continuous racism, the *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder* was part of the Black press in America that led the struggle for freedom and equality through the stories they told. They gave voice to those that were oppressed, despite the efforts to silence the *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder* by the overriding dominant culture. The *Spokesman* was not only an advocate for the African-American community but it also employed individuals that would do the right thing. The newspaper nurtured individuals such as Gordon Parks and Carl Rowan, both of whom started at the *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder*. Gordon Parks started as a newspaper boy, and overtime started taking photographs that which were well represented in the column that Cecil created called, "Beauty of the Week."<sup>9</sup> This provided Parks with the resources that he needed to succeed and a journalism career that led to taking memorable photos of Muhammad Ali, Malcom X, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and Stokely Carmichael.

As the publisher of the *Spokesman Recorder*, Cecil Newman became an outstanding African American citizen of Minnesota because of his lifetime work, a supportive group of friends, and those that worked alongside him. These individuals included Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, Donald Fraser and individuals that worked on civil rights issues with him, including Nellie Stone Johnson, Gordon Parks, and Carl Rowan. As Newman worked diligently as a publisher, he started to form closer relationships with governors, judges, congressional members, and mayors.

"Publishing the news about our Negro community raised our morale...it made us feel that we were really a part of the big city. It also showed the white population that we were responsible citizens with our own rights. It helped them to understand us. My newspapers became an instrument of force, a means of hitting both sides of the problem at the same time."<sup>10</sup> Newman often used the *Spokesman Recorder* as a voice for the Black community. There were no other local news sources that spoke out for African Americans, or even celebrated the good within the Black community. Nevertheless, the *Spokesman Recorder* served the purpose of representing African Americans and sharing their stories.

The subject property may also be eligible for designation as a landmark under the other six designation criteria. Such an analysis would be conducted as part of a designation study.

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<sup>8</sup> Tracey Williams-Dillard, Interview with Jon Collins, Spokesman-Recorder's office, January 25, 2011, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/58758509/Tracey-Williams>.

<sup>9</sup> Tracey Williams-Dillard, Interview with Jon Collins, Spokesman-Recorder's office, January 25, 2011, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/58758509/Tracey-Williams>.

<sup>10</sup> L. E. Leipold, *CECIL E. NEWMAN: Newspaper Publisher* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc.) 87.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development for the Nomination for Designation as a Landmark:**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the nomination of 3744 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South as a landmark; **establish** interim protection; and **direct** the Planning Director to prepare or cause to be prepared a designation study.

## ATTACHMENTS

### A. Nomination